

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Official Publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Vol. 39, No. 8

Urbana, Illinois

May, 1952

Published every month except June, July, August and September. Subscription price, \$2.00 per year; single copies, 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter October 29, 1941, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Communications may be addressed to J. N. Hook, 121 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois.

The Freshman's Errors In Composition

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In May, 1944, the *Illinois English Bulletin* published a study entitled "Errors Most Commonly Checked in Early Freshman Compositions." The present article reports a similar investigation at the University of Illinois, prompted in part by the feeling that the 1943-1944 group of freshmen, a war-time group, might have been atypical. One purpose is to compare the 1951-1952 group of freshmen with the earlier group. The other purpose is to give as objective a view as possible of the writing of the current freshmen. Comments or recommendations suggested by the study will be obvious to the English teacher and readily translatable into pedagogical terms. Personal opinions of the authors will be equally obvious, and may be subject to revision.

This study deals with 500 papers, consisting of the first five themes written by 100 individual students, 80 in Rhetoric 101 and 20 in Rhetoric 100.¹ The themes include an impromptu essay written as part of the rhetoric placement test given during registration week, two additional impromptus, and two outside themes. In some sections one of the outside themes consisted of a single well-developed paragraph. The themes were from 13 sections, chosen at random, and taught by as many different instructors. The numbers of students chosen, also at random, from the eleven Rhetoric 101 sections were: 19, 21, 11, 10, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2; from

¹ The ratio is that of Rhetoric 101 students to Rhetoric 100 students as the two groups are separated by the Freshman Placement Test taken by all entering freshmen. Rhetoric 101 is the regular freshman course taken by those who pass the placement test. Rhetoric 100 is a non-credit course for those who fail.

the two Rhetoric 100 sections, 14 and 6. The placement essays of all these students were read and marked closely by the writers of this article. Errors recorded in the remaining four papers of each student were, with occasional exceptions, those marked by the instructors. Some fragments and comma splices and other debatable usages, no doubt, were marked for pedagogical reasons, but the standards were not notably puristic. At least the adverbial *due to* and the conjunctive *like* raised no objections. The categories are essentially those of the 1944 article. The instruction during the weeks when the papers were written may have reduced the number in a few of the categories, since a brief study of grammar and punctuation was included in the class work of those weeks.

The table below presents the number of "infractions" and the number of students marked for each infraction. Columns 1 and 2 give the data on the 20 Rhetoric 100 students; columns 3 and 4, the data on the 80 Rhetoric 101 students; and columns 5 and 6, the totals. The total of students is also the percentage, since 100 students was the grand total. The number in the last column is the percentage of students who made similar errors in the 1944 study.

Comparison with the 1943-1944 Record

The categories² included here, but not in the earlier article, are: Colon, Dash, Question Mark, Semicolon (used where a comma should appear), Sentence Construction, and Singular-Plural confusion. The first three and the last are not of great significance. Of the remaining two, Sentence Construction is the more significant; it represents errors which in 1944 constituted a fair proportion of the errors marked "Logic and extreme incoherence."

The striking fact established by comparison of the present record with the earlier is the increase in the percentage of students marked for errors in almost all individual categories. Only in Case, Italics, and Comma: Series, in all three of which the number of errors was small, was there a decrease in the percentage of offenders. The average percentage of increase in the 1952 figures is 19.7: that is, 19.7% more of the freshmen studied this year made errors in each comparable category. If the three categories in which a decrease occurred are excluded, the average percentage leaps to 22.5. And this figure might have been even higher if the

² In the 1944 study the various categories were analyzed into such larger groups as Grammar, Punctuation, Coherence. The alphabetical order was adopted here to harmonize with other research projects at the University.

TABLE I

	Rhetoric 100		Rhetoric 101		Totals		1944 % of Stu- dents
	No. Errors	Stu- dents	Errors	Stu- dents	Errors	Stu- dents	
Adjective-Adverb	11	7	33	24	44	31	10
Agreement	50	19	95	51	145	70	48
Apostrophe	43	16	102	43	145	59	35
Capitals	71	20	88	57	159	77	50
Case	4	4	15	4	19	8	11
Colon	5	5	11	11	16	16	
Coordination excessive	21	11	31	19	52	30	26
Comma Splice	62	14	106	36	168	49	35
Comma							
Compound Sentence	73	15	175	50	248	65	58
Introductory Element	72	19	117	46	189	65	49
Series	4	4	32	19	36	23	29
Non-restrictive	83	17	210	63	293	80	72
Superfluous	86	16	356	71	442	87	51
Dangling Modifier	11	9	44	28	55	37	24
Dash	4	4	18	11	22	15	
Diction							
Exactness	94	19	485	79	579	98	95
Wordiness	49	17	174	64	223	81	54
Idiom	23	11	94	43	117	54	26
Fragment	41	14	82	44	123	58	27
Hyphen	76	18	179	63	255*	81	35
Italics	3	3	51	28	54	31	33
K: Awkward	20	12	84	47	104	59	
Logic	67	20	146	63	213	83	35
Misplaced Modifier	13	8	65	35	78	43	30**
Parallelism	22	10	73	42	95	52	24
Point of View	29	17	153	51	182	68	46
Question Mark	6	4	25	19	31	23	
Quotes	9	6	33	24	42	30	25
Repetition	21	9	47	33	68	42	16
Reference	91	18	332	73	423	91	59
Semicolon (for comma)	9	4	64	34	73	38	
Sentence Construction	76	20	126	57	202	77	
Singular-Plural	16	9	44	33	60	42	
Spelling	309	20	803	79	1112	99	86
Tense	70	19	161	64	231	83	29

* The 1952 figures include a few errors in syllabication.

**The corresponding category in the 1944 study was labeled "Word Order."

offenders listed under K (Awkwardness) and Sentence Construction had been distributed and recorded, as most of them might have been, under Diction and Logic.

How is the increased percentage of offenders to be explained? One explanation is that one to two pages more of each student's writing was used in the present study. But this fact would, the

writers feel, affect the number of errors rather more than the percentage of students.³ It seems reasonable to agree that the 1951-1952 crop of freshmen were not so well prepared as the 1943-1944 group, and to attempt an explanation of that fact. The "universe" of the earlier study consisted of only 950 students enrolled in freshman rhetoric in the midst of World War II; of these some 61% were coeds, who as a group invariably surpass their male compeers in the mystery of composition. The later universe was 2340 students who received at least a large part of their primary and secondary education during the troublesome days of the war and its aftermath. The percentage of women was 33.

But the comparison of the two groups is not of supreme importance. The significant fact is that a very high percentage of freshmen entering the University of Illinois are seriously limited in spelling, in their practice of the amenities of writing, in the use of words, and in their manipulation of sentence patterns.

Spelling

Spelling is still a particular demon. Ninety-nine students, out of a possible 100, misspelled a total of 1112 words, an average of more than eleven words each—more than two to a paper. Of the total number of misspellings, 130 were second or third misspellings of the same word by the same student. The total of different words misspelled was 732.

Many, if not most, of the hardy perennials are on the list of those words misspelled by two or more students:

³ The following brief table compares the average number of errors per student offender in 8 key categories:

	1943-1944 Group				1951-1952 Group		
	Students (147)	%	Errors	Average Errors	Students and %	Errors	Average Errors
Agreement	70	48	105	1.5	70	145	2.0
Comma Splice	52	35	97	1.9	49	168	3.4
Comma : non- restrictive	106	72	272	2.6	80	293	3.7
Diction : exactness	140	95	734	5.2	98	485	5.0
Fragment	40	27	56	1.4	58	123	2.1
Parallelism	36	24	46	1.3	52	95	1.8
Reference	87	59	155	1.8	91	423	4.6
Tense	43	29	69	1.6	83	231	2.8

In all categories but one, Diction: Exactness, there occurs an increase in the 1952 average which a statistician would probably call significant even with due allowance for the increased number of pages of writing considered in the 1952 study.

affect-effect	occurrence
believe	prejudice
definite	principal-principle
environment	receive
existence	sophomore
interest	their-there-they're
loose-lose	then-than
necessary	to-too

A fair number of the errors, including some in the preceding list, are due to the ambiguities of English letters as a record of pronunciation, correct or incorrect. The homonyms interchange even on the syllable level (*reguardless* for *regardless*); silent letters disappear (*facinate* for *fascinate*, *diaphram* for *diaphragm*) as do lightly stressed sounds or syllables (*Artic* for *Arctic*, *probaly* for *probably*, *intrest* for *interest*); weakly stressed or neutral vowels interchange (*excellant* for *excellent*, *appitite* for *appetite*, *calibur* for *caliber*); alternative symbols of specific sounds intrude (*growns* for *groans*, *imagine* for *imagine*, *consentrate* for *concentrate*). Fuzzy pronunciations also trap the unwary: *pennate* for *pennant* and *perminate* for *permanent*; *disallusioned* for *disillusioned*; *enviroment*, *enviroment* for *environment*; *perscribe* for *prescribe*; *indecation* for *indication*; *resevoirs* for *reservoirs*; *mirrow* for *mirror*. Finally, and in some instances closely allied to the pronunciation principle, there are misspellings due to ignorance of the rules governing spelling: for example, such spellings as *shinning* for *shining*, *referred* for *referred*, *scraping* for *scrapping*, *trys* for *tries*.

Most of the misspellings considered thus far have the virtue of indicating, or at least approximating, the correct pronunciation. To write *sence* for *sense* is at least not nonsense; to write *foresite* for *foresight* might even be approved by a spelling reformer. A few of the misspellings, however, lack the sweetness of rational approximation of the sound of any words current, or make the approximation in a confusingly eccentric fashion. For example, the following, paired with the words they presumably represent:

hypocrocism (hypocrisy)	parallelized (paralyzed)
ceromies (ceremonies)	theroy (theory)
conventitions (conventions)	phycillities (facilities)
foreocious (ferocious)	foregion (foreign)

Obviously many a freshman enters with too little discipline in spelling. It is less obvious, perhaps, but reasonable, to say that competent spelling should be insisted upon in *all* written work of

the high-school student, not merely in themes and spelling tests. A few rules will help to some extent, but the students appear to need a full consideration of the relations between sounds and letters, especially the variant spellings used to represent the various sounds and the vagaries of the unstressed vowels.

The Errors Recorded ⁴

In a few categories the figures are clearly of little significance. Since about half of the students wrote book reports, there was a fair number of failures to use italics. All the theme assignments called for exposition; hence there was almost no opportunity for error in the use of quotation marks. The lapses in capitalization and in the use of the apostrophe indicate, however, that the small number of errors in the former categories is no indication of near-perfection in the smaller mechanical details. The comma, in perfect conformity with bettor's odds, leads all errors with a total of 1208, an average of twelve per student. The distribution of the comma errors in the five categories will seem equally predictable, with the possible exception of the superfluous comma. In the latter the percentage of Rhetoric 100 offenders is slightly lower than that of Rhetoric 101 students, in contrast with the percentages in most of the other categories. The English teacher, however, recognizes the superfluous comma as an indication of a degree of sophistication; it is an attempt to please the teacher, who is fondly supposed to dote on paper well spiced with commas. Consequently the better student is the more liable to the lapse. The point is confirmed by the similar distribution of the errors labeled "Semicolon." Only 4 out of 20 Rhetoric 100 writers used semicolons where commas were called for; 34 out of 80 Rhetoric 101 students made the same error. The former group *should* be the smaller; they obviously (cf. the Comma Splice category) have but a nodding acquaintance with the troublesome mark; the latter group know the mark, and the seriousness of a failure to use it properly, but are a bit over-zealous in putting it to work.

The errors which reflect a combination of ignorance of punctuation and of sentence structure, the Comma Splice and the Fragment, are remarkable only for the frequency of their occurrence. Some of those marked may admittedly be of the type which a professional writer uses with good effect, but which the college

⁴ All sentences used as examples are presented unedited, with all errors, not just those which illustrate the point under discussion. They are all from placement examination essays: impromptu themes written without benefit of instruction in college classes.

student is usually expected to use only after he has demonstrated his control of the complete sentence. But when a student writes

It was a very sick part of the country and why, because they had free labor, every plantation owner had a large number of slaves to work his fields,

the instructor is faced with a serious problem of pointing. The student could probably have read the sentence rather effectively, with a full stop after *country*, a questioning pause after *why*, and a full stop after *labor*. Since he did not help his reader achieve an intelligible reading at first glance, his comma splicing must be called objectionable. Another student splits off a coordinate, almost by way of afterthought,

Here at the University I hope to make many acquaintances. Add new friends to old.

Had the student used the sign of the infinitive before *add* as a reminder, the instructor might be tempted to compliment him on a skilful fragment. But the instructor would lose confidence and resort to a *non licet* when the same student faced him with

Here at the University I hope and expect to have many activities. "To let your hair down" as some one once said, "and have fun."

The *to* in the fragment is happy, the connective desired in the example above. But the shift in point of view from the expected *my* to *your* shatters all. The lad hopes and expects to let *my* hair down! He shall do nothing of the kind. He shall try to achieve the coherence prescribed by his instructor. The young man who wrote

When ever an athlete wins high honors, such as All State football and basketball player. I think he should be proud and hold his head high, but I don't think he should act stuck-up or conceded

would get no shrift. His *honors* become basketball and football players, his first *and* should probably be *or*, and the picture of his hero acting *conceded* is frustrating. A Rhetoric 100 teacher had a labor ahead, for five other sentences in the theme were as seriously deformed.

The more strictly grammatical categories among the errors are Case, Singular-Plural confusion, Tense, Agreement of verbs and of pronouns. Exposition offers relatively few occasions for errors in case. The few which occurred showed the usual doubts about *who* and *whom* and *his* and *him* as the precursor of a gerund; one

or two students were misled, in their efforts to be strictly grammatical, into the *between you and I* or the *let's you and I* type of error. The misuses of singular and plural were perhaps chiefly due to carelessness (e.g., "one of the most amazing and interesting happening"); a few gave a mildly incongruous sense ("they could not make up their mind"). The following sentence shows the error together with the use of adjective for adverb:

This is one of the reason why the White Sox were hitting so good.

Others, ignoring the distinction of adjective and adverb, wrote "they burn real dim," "how easy we got by," and "everyone sees talent just a little different." Only the near-colloquial *badly* for the predicate adjective reversed the direction in this category.

The errors in Tense and Mood range from the careless omission of the *-ed* of a past tense or a past participle to unestablished subjunctives and faulty sequence of tense. In "because Russia did not agree, she, and her other communistic countries walk out of the meeting," the superfluous comma and the illogical *her* overshadow the uninflected form. The shift in the following from the indicative to a past potential is more confusing:

If this type of Welfare program works and the community could finance it, a swimming pool could be added.

Perhaps the shift is merely a result of the natural but objectionable attraction to the conditional clause of the form proper in the apodosis, a lapse illustrated in the following:

Furthermore, if all people would have belong to a Christian faith, I don't think there would have been wars.

. . . if they would've opened it up again while school was going on it would have bought [brought down, solved?] this delinquency problem of my home town.

As a final example of a genuine problem in tense, observe the following failure of sequence in compound predicate verbs in a fragment:

After I had taken my seat and began to concentrate on what was going on on the stage.

Errors in Agreement can be colloquial matters or serious grammatical lapses. Although the "everyone—their" disagreement can be effectively defended on psychological and statistical grounds, it was marked on the grounds that the college student should know the status of the usage. This usage was common. The use of *they*

referring to the general "a person" is perhaps no less excusable, as in "When a person reaches that point they are given up." The language must share the blame for such grammatical disagreement; to use *he*, *his*, and *him* as common gender is for reasons of both gender and number more confusing to the unsophisticate than to use *they*. The disagreement of subject and verb, however, rests upon no such limitation in the language and is therefore generally indefensible:

Another point against these pitchers are that they are getting up in age. . . .

The errors particularly affecting coherence are Dangling Modifiers, Misplaced Modifiers, lack of Parallelism, shift of Point of View, and Reference. Some danglers may be debatable:

Every four years we get a different answer confusing the average American more than he is already.

It is clear, however, that an overhauling of the sentence is needed. At the very least, the context showed, the participial phrase was non-restrictive. An infinitive to replace the participle would clear up the meaning, leaving only the dubious structure of the *than* clause and the spelling to be remarked. Such loose, tacked-on participles, attempting the modification of a whole sentence idea, constituted about 80% of the errors in this group. But there were a few classic examples of the preceding dangler that creates a fantastic world in which anything can happen, in which, for example, a ticket office can play very effective baseball:

Besides having a very good year on the playing field, the White Sox ticket office did a very prosperous business.

The misplaced modifier, like the dangler, is sometimes merely clumsy:

I feel that a person should be able to accept the responsibilities that anyone gives him to be really grown.

Such a sentence, properly read, could serve. The colloquial location of *just*, *only*, and the like, which was responsible for several of the misplaced modifiers, was presumably marked only to call to the student's mind the strict requirements of logic. But the following mislocation of *well* produces a queer sense:

Our younger generation, and future citizens should be well kept in mind.

Failure in Parallelism of ideas or sentence elements obviously similar may, once again, yield results ranging from awkwardness

to rather serious confusion. One can flounder through the misspellings of this sentence:

In their early games although not getting to many hits they got there hits when they where needed, with men on base.

But surely style demands some such clause as "although they did not get too many hits"—and a possible remodeling to avoid a difficulty in reference and a repetition of *hits*. The following are perhaps more baffling:

Living with others away from home is the best and an important factor in developing the future man and woman of tomorrow.

The best implies or includes the idea of importance. The basic error was to parallel anything with *best*. Certainly an indefinite cannot be made to seem parallel with the definite *the best*.

Not only do I want a fair education and a developed personality from the University but it should teach me to be on my own.

The location of *not only* may have been responsible for the writer's illusion that he was paralleling two main clauses in a logical way. Revision seems to demand some such sentence as: "I want from the University not only a fair education but also the ability to form my own judgments."

When I say they are the greatest team I not only speak of my personal opinion, but for an ever growing number of their fans.

Not only was marked as a misplaced modifier. It should be easy to show the student how much better the sentence would be if it read "I speak not only for myself but for . . ."

As a final example, and a climax in frustration:

They will be the backbone of our town and future happiness in years to come.

Did the writer mean to strain our imagination by forcing us to visualize "the backbone of our future happiness"? Or did he mean simply the foundation or the guarantors of our future happiness?

The category Point of View was rather arbitrarily limited to shifts in person and a very few in voice, other shifts involving verbs

—tense, mood, number—having been entered under Tense and Agreement. One example of the shift will suffice:

Your college years are the most glorious years of your life and one should make the best of it.

The "PV" marked against the sentence referred, of course, to the shift from *your* to *one*, not to the shift from the plural to singular in *it*.

"Reference" was limited to incorrect or vague reference: shifts in person and number were recorded elsewhere as indicated. A few examples will show that the faulty reference includes slightly unorthodox reference to a noun in a minor sentence element, the looseness of colloquial usage, and the downright confusing dispersion occasioned by an overworked *this*:

There were the gold rushes, the immigrations, and the rugged life of a pioneer. He enjoyed the wide open spaces.

The phrase of a *pioneer* is so nearly the equivalent of an adjective ("the rugged pioneer life") that the student's reference can hardly be allowed.

The bad part of it is the U.N does nothing to correct these situations.

The *it* is the same as the one in the colloquial "the thing of it is"—tolerable in conversation, perhaps, but inadequate for the reader of serious discussion.

There is plenty to say about this topic I have chosen for my theme. I will start with the streets; the streets are narrow and they hardly ever clean them like other cities do. . . .

The second sentence is especially confusing because the shift from *streets* as subject to the generalized *they* is perceptible only through the context.

The main thought behind the United Nations is to promote world peace. This is the main problem which confronted other forms of world government. An example of this is the League of Nations, which failed mainly because of their indecision on this problem of world peace.

The first *this* might, with a charity not to be expected as a regular trait of all readers, refer to the promotion of world peace. The second *this*, again referring to a general idea but a different one, completes the dispersion of the thought until one does not have the will to query the num-

ber of *their*. It would seem that the pedagogue who insists on the use of *this* only as an adjectival form has justification.

In order to have a team win games, he [the general manager] must put in new personel even if its a manager.

Does *it* refer to new personnel, a collective, plural in sense? If so, is the singular *it* due to the attraction of "a manager"?

The last group of errors are those which strike at the very soul of the communication process: the misuse of words, the malconstruction of sentences, and the breakdown of logic. Misuses of single words are recorded under Diction—Exactness. Some of the slips are admittedly near misses, such as the failure to make a figurative usage consistent. For example, a student who wrote "I hope and expect to have many activities" failed to perceive that *activities* demands an infinitive which implies *acting*: to engage in, to participate or take part in. Similarly a student failed to visualize what one must do to obstacles when he wrote:

There are many obstacles which I must get used to before I can follow a proper routine.

It is, of course, an acute observation that human beings tend to get used to obstacles rather than to surmount them. But the student did not mean any such thing. The reader is scarcely more edified when a student writes that "Many stand by the old adage that a woman's place is the home" and that "Women are now on a nearly equal standard with men." The reader has spent a lifetime holding with—or by—adages, and standing on a level, not a standard, with others.

As difficult to accept, but possibly less easy to see as bungled figures of speech are the following:

These are the blind one who have put the world in a turmoil.

This tax stated that each citizen who owned a car must pay five dollars a year to use the roads.

In the first, the word *put* makes involving the world in turmoil seem an act like putting a nickel in a slot. In the second, a tax, unless personified (and there is no hint of a reason for personification here), does not "state." The tax law might be said to make a statement; the tax would *require*.

Although the malconstruction in most sentences marked "S Cst" gave a confused sense, a few of the errors in this category seem to result from mere carelessness in fitting together sentence elements:

If special attention is needed I should think and expect the teacher to help.

We are forced to read "should think the teacher to help," an un-English construction which escaped the writer's attention when he inserted "and expect."

These are my main ideas for answering the question, What they see in Martin and Lewis.

Punctuation and capitalization seem to announce that the question is to be direct, not indirect: "What do they see . . ." The word *ideas* seems a poor choice, but does not affect the structure.

Last but not least I would invite a few factories to settle in Blank-burg, so to increase the population of my town.

Possibly allowable, but *so as* or *in order to* would clarify the structure.

A more complicated example, perhaps a triple example, is:

When the cadet who turned the other cadets in who were cheating, he was upholding a code that he believed in.

Although it is sometimes permissible to split a verb-adverb combination like "turned in," it would seem inadvisable to allow the split to separate a noun from its relative clause. Further, the *when* clause is never completed, and the *who* clause attached to a *who* clause is clumsy.

In the following a really serious failure of sense results from malconstructions:

By announcing in the papers and over the radio of the coming dismissal of these men, something never done before, it makes me wonder if this honor system is all it should be.

"By announcing . . . of the coming dismissal" is of course a malconstruction, since the plain gerund in present English takes an object direct. More seriously, the word *it* as the subject is due to the writer's recognition that the *announcement* of the dismissal is the real subject of the sentence. The reference of *it* to the abstract *ing* form, which is a part of a prepositional phrase, is vague and leaves the gerund phrase without structural status.

You cannot have a strong and united organization if when one of your members does not approve of something going on get up and walks out of the meeting.

The writer never got around to supplying the *if* clause with a subject. Apparently *members* lingered in his mind as the subject long enough to give the plural *get*, and then *one* popped back into his mind to yield *walks*. At any rate, a thoroughly irresponsible bit of sentence building resulted.

The category Logic was intended to include all sentences in which the failure to make sense was not traceable to any explicable malconstruction or erroneous use of words. The graders may have been guilty of a bit of hairsplitting in the allocation of some usages to this category, but they believe it joins the misuse of words and malconstruction as the most serious indictment of the writing of this group of students. The looseness of haste may yield, as it does dozens of times daily in the speech of intelligent folk, a sentence like:

And to me, that is what my home town needs.

Perhaps "to me" is a proper descendant of the old *meseems* or *methinks*, but "to my mind" and "in my opinion" appear the logical descendants. The following six examples from the category may be presented with only sufficient comment to show where they fail in logic:

These are all a means for increasing members of their respective churches.

For increasing the *number* of members, the membership?

On the intra-mural side, which is in my opinion, the only part of sports I can partake in, there are many possibilities. . . .

A "side" of sports appears to become a "part"—and neither word is precise. Should the sentence read, "In intramural sports, the only kind I can take part in, . . . "?

In looking for a college where I would come in contact with a calibur of companionship similar to my ideals I asked myself several questions.

How does one come into contact with a "caliber of companionship"? And what is it to be "similar" to anyone's ideal? Should the sentence read, "In deciding upon a

college where I would meet worthwhile people . . ."—or something equally simple?

Should a president be a party man or disregard the party and be only for the American Citizen? The answer in my opinion is no.

The writer really meant this, but should have set up these two sentences so that they would be clear in themselves, not make a puzzle to be cleared up in a later sentence. He might have written "The answer to both questions is no."

It was a long hard and difficult way to the top of success for them but now that their there, I think their here to stay.

Where are they?

Industry has overcome natural resorces in the race of luring new blood.

The meaning seems to be: "Industry is now luring more newcomers to the West than the natural resources."

Three final examples progress from mere vacuity to a climax of the ludicrous:

A well balanced person should be at least slightly interested in all sports and activities. Life on campus, and social activities cover most sports.

Do they indeed?

Another insect, at frequent times, is the grasshopper.

A far miss for the apparent meaning that another insect pest which frequently appears is the grasshopper.

For example, George Washington Carver worked his way to the top with much difficulty and by doing this he showed the people how they could use the peanut to great advantage.

A strange limitation of the effects, and presumably the means, of working to the top. All great men, then, are students of the peanut?

A Pair of Whole Themes

The reader whose professional interest has carried him along to this point will probably like to see some samples of whole themes presented by students peculiarly adept at befogging a message. The following is admittedly one of the weakest; it gained its writer a place in Rhetoric 100. The reader can no doubt add to the mar-

ginal marks, especially if he considers the structure of the paragraphs and of the whole. Would he advise such a student to try for a college degree?

quotes	"What My Home Town Needs"	
superf	What my home town, of Blankburg, Illin-	hy
sp	ois, needs is someone who has enough fore-	
sp/non-r	site to see that as long as they lieev the	agr
wordy	town in the same state of affairs that it	
non-r	has always been in that there will never be	
sp/cst	any groth and if any only a very little.	
cst	What is needed is a plan, so through the	
	years to build up the town so people will	
sp	want to live there and bring there busi-	
	nesses also.	
d	Factories will never set up as long as	
sp	there are know better roads or a better way	
sp/d-ex	of getting rid of watter. My ideal is the	
cst	first thing build an outlet for the water	non-r
cs	if only an open ditch, if it is to expen-	sp
intro	sive to use pipe that could come later after	
t-vf	the problem of get rid of the water and then	
pl	building new roads. Road will never hold up	
	as long as they are built where the water	
id	from the ditches can stand and sock under	
sp	and with in a short time distroy know matter	cst
cst	of material they are made oil, cement, ect.	sp
non-r	In my home town, as many others I sup-	cst
	pose, there are men on the town board and	
W/ref	in other offices that are in them just to	
sp	hold the name or for their own gane. At one	
sp	time a small factory was thing of moveing a	sp
	branch of its factory to our town, but some	
	of the men on the town board who would have	
id	taken a lower standing of which they had	cst
t-vf	not been use to or rather thought they	
	would, set out, and with not to much effort	sp
ref	discouraged the factory owners. And it set-	
sp	tled in another small town next to owers	non-r
sp	which is now some what larger than it was.	
sp	Officers who have know more interest in a	
cpd	town than this should be gotten rid of and	
paral	someone with ideals and who wants to see	

cst his town grow. I hope someday someone will
 log see the light and at least clean the town
 up.

The writer of the second theme was sent into a Rhetoric 101 class—certain proof that the readers of the placement examination (who were not the authors of this article) were not tremendously fussy. Perhaps the content, the paragraphing, and the organization of the whole theme showed the readers that the student might succeed in Rhetoric 101. The record of the student justifies his placement, as he developed steadily and made a C in the course.

cap/ap THE Farmers Biggest Problem

agr In this day when there is many new in-
 ventions and ways of doing things on the
 sp farm, there are many probems. It is hard
 to say which would be the greatest. t

K One which would be very close to the
 d-ex top is insects. Insects have seemed to
 X/id come about much more in recent years. Many
 intro years ago farmers we bothered very little
 d-ex by insects. As years went on insects
 ref/X seemed to come out. At first the farmers
 pl thought they were lost, by the resarch de-
 partments of our institutions got down to
 sp work. They experimented with spray with
 which to kill insects. For example, the
 corn bore used to destroy many bushels of
 corn each year. Science went to work and
 found a spray that would kill these insects.
 Today a farmer can spray his corn when the
 pv insect gets on it and his worries are over.

sp A nother insect, at frequent times, is
 log the grasshopper. This insect, I believe,
 does most of his damage to the wheat crop.
 The grasshopper can get into a wheat crop
 cs and eat the straw, then the grain falls to
 ref the ground. This makes it impossible to be
 K picked up by the combine. The worst part
 pv is that you can't spray this insect on a
 intro wheat crop. If you do this you kill the
 wheat and clover, the plant which follows
 wheat.

K

sp	A nother insect is the bowl-weevil.	
coord	This insect is found in the cotton-belt. It	
pv	has destroyed more cotton than any other insect known. He gets into the center of the cotton and eats the heart out, causing the blossom to die. Science has in late years found a spray to kill this insect without damaging the cotton.	
intro	Also too the potato growers there has	sp
K	been a pest, the potato bug. This bug used	
pv	to kill the plant at blossom time. He would eat holes in the leaves of the plant,	
ref	causing it not to be able to get the necessities of life.	K/d-ex
	Although most of these insects seem to be conquered, they have in very recent years been great problems. There are numerous insects which can get on the soy bean, clover, and oat plants and destroy them. The big trouble on these kind of plants is that they can not be sprayed without killing the plant.	
K/agr		
	In spite of the difficulties, if the demand gets great enough, science will find a solution. In this, most farmers feel confident.	
d-ex/ref		

Conclusion

Leaders in business and the professions lament that the English (spoken and written) of the high school and college graduate is inadequate to the needs of the modern world; such is a fact of the environment into which the graduate will move and to which schools must react. As society has demanded more and more persons with a high degree of technical training, society has managed to provide the men with that training. We may assume that when society demands of every trained man a high level of literacy and makes failure the penalty of inability to speak and write well, then the individual citizen will have the incentive to master speech and writing. Then the training necessary to such mastery will, like charity, begin at home; it will be a sort of moral demand of universal validity.

This kind of demand will, of course, focus upon the school and must, to achieve its fulfillment, be a demand that every teacher,

of what subject or complex of subjects or projects soever, be responsible for the students' expression of ideas, facts, and attitudes. This is not to say that every teacher must be an English teacher in a technical sense, but that every teacher must see all teaching as, in part, an insistence upon clarity and logic of expression as one of the facets of mastery of knowledge and of attitude. Twice as many teachers of English in our schools and those twice as well paid would, of course, make for better training in English. But the other teachers would still play a large part in determining whether the group attitude in school were such as to call for decency, clarity, and logic in all expression in the educational process, or whether that attitude remained one of diffidence and unconcern, an attitude that writing and speech are for authors, for a favored few, and those few rather impractical folk.

In a word, such articles as this are usually addressed to the wrong people—to those who both know the problems and have a notion of their significance and of what is necessary to their solution. But until the millennium such studies may help as a guide to an intelligent curriculum in English. The facts represented in Table 1, which of course does not include faults in paragraphing and general structure, are convincing evidence that a full view of grammar and rhetoric is necessary. Such a view will involve the examination and analysis of good sentences as patterns. The informal and colloquial patterns should perhaps be the first data, and the instruction might not proceed beyond the requirements of a simple but flexible formal style. The emphases needed are on success in communication: the use of words in their exact senses, of the basic facts of sentence construction and punctuation—all as they are related to clear and effective presentation of ideas and feelings. Good reading and intelligent listening would seem to be the best means of developing awareness of the patterns; conscious practice the means of making the patterns a tool of intelligent thought.

FALL MEETING—OCTOBER 3, 4

Encircle October 3 and 4 on your calendar now. Those dates have been chosen by the program committee for the annual fall meeting of the I.A.T.E.

The program committee is asking all Illinois members to indicate their choices for topics of discussion in the workshops or discussion groups to be held at the meeting. These groups will begin meeting at 3 p.m. on Friday, October 3, at the University in Urbana. (Registration is at 2 p.m.) As usual, a banquet and a well-known speaker are scheduled for Friday night. The discussions will continue on Saturday morning. The meeting will end with a luncheon and a speaker Saturday noon.

WILMER LAMAR

Chairman, Program Committee

BEST HIGH-SCHOOL POETRY AND PROSE OF 1952

As usual, two of the issues of the *Bulletin* will be devoted in 1952-53 to some of the best poetry and prose written by Illinois high-school students. You are invited to submit *at any time* original writing by your students. When you clean out your files at the end of this school year, why not send in the best writing done by your students?

It seems advisable to make a few minor changes in policy concerning these issues. These changes, as well as the older principles that will still be followed, are summarized below.

1. Since the issues will not appear until 1953, only writing by students who are enrolled in 1952-53 should be submitted. In other words, papers by graduates of the Class of 1952 should not be sent.

2. No more than ten poems or five pieces of prose should be submitted by any one teacher (unless, of course, the selections are in a school magazine which is sent complete). In the past some teachers have sent in as many as a hundred manuscripts.

3. Each group of manuscripts should be accompanied by a statement from the teacher saying that to the best of his knowledge each paper is original.

4. The name of the writer, the name of his high school, the year of his graduation, and the name of his teacher should be

plainly indicated at the bottom of each manuscript. Please follow this form:

JOHN JONES, Exville H. S., '54
Mary Smith, teacher

5. The deadline, unless a change is announced in a fall issue, is December 20, 1952.

6. No manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by an addressed envelope with first-class postage attached.

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The executive board of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English met Saturday, March 15, 1952, at nine-thirty a.m. at the Carson Pirie Scott tearoom in Chicago. Miss Hila Stone, president, presided.

The secretary's report was read and approved. The treasurer reported a balance of \$2032.46. A favorable comparison was made between this balance and the balances of the two previous years.

Dr. C. W. Roberts asked for a show of hands to indicate approval of the Association's financing a booth at the meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English in Boston next November. Approval was so indicated.

Dr. J. N. Hook reported the progress of the literary map of Illinois. The map will be published late in the spring. The March and April issues of the *Illinois English Bulletin* contain biographical and bibliographical information concerning Illinois authors.

Dr. Hook also reported tentative plans for the 1952-53 *Bulletin*. A project intended to assist teachers in evaluating student themes was approved.

Miss Liesette McHarry, as chairman of the curriculum committee, reported that the project of revising the book list, with choices and annotations by students, had been suggested. The project could be carried out with the cooperation of the Illinois Library Association. There was, however, the need to consider the expense of such a project.

Miss McHarry made a motion, seconded by Mr. Wilmer Lamar, that the Illinois Association of Teachers of English approve the plan for the revision of the book list in cooperation with the Illinois Library Association. The motion carried.

Miss Lois Dilley reported that the ISSCP is now known as the Illinois Curriculum Program or ICP. *The Illinois Story* is to be distributed after approval of affiliates.

After a discussion concerning the Association's affiliation with ICP, Dr. Roberts made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Ethel Bugbee, that the Association's representative ask the ICP's Steering Committee to supply the officers with publications of the ICP before publication, if possible. Motion carried.

Dr. Roberts made a motion that in planning the fall meeting, the Association continue in cooperation with the College of Education and the Department of English of the University of Illinois. Motion was properly seconded and carried.

The meeting adjourned to join the luncheon meeting of the English Club of Greater Chicago.

Respectfully submitted,

MAUDE E. DORSETT,
Secretary.

EXTENSION COURSES IN ENGLISH

Are you interested in an extension course in English if one can be arranged in your town next fall by the University of Illinois Department of English? Would you want an undergraduate course in literature or in rhetoric? If you are interested, or if you know of others who might be interested—whether they are high-school teachers, elementary-school teachers, or not teachers at all—please drop me a note or a postal card indicating your preference in courses. I want to give a course that you would like, for I want to please and serve *you*.

CONSTANCE NICHOLAS, Ph.D.
Department of English
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

LITERARY MAP COMING SOON

Because of unforeseeable delays in printing, the literary map is not ready, but will be soon. Your copy will be mailed you at the earliest possible date.

LOOKING AHEAD WITH THE I.A.T.E.

The major project of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English in 1952-53 will be an attempt to provide help in the evaluation of written work. One issue of the *Bulletin* will print a number of good, bad, and indifferent compositions written by high-school freshmen (who will remain anonymous, as will their schools). Each composition will be graded and commented upon by a number of Illinois teachers of high-school freshmen. The purpose of the issue will be to lead toward a higher degree of uniformity in evaluating and to call attention to the aspects of writing that some of our most able high-school teachers believe should be emphasized. A related issue of the *Bulletin* will work toward bridging the gap between high school and college. In this issue a number of high-school senior themes will be evaluated and commented upon by high-school teachers and by teachers of college freshman composition in a number of Illinois colleges. A considerable number of members of the Association will be asked to assist in these two issues.

Other issues of the *Bulletin* in 1952-53 will contain articles on teaching the writing of essays and short stories, on the impact of television upon students in English classes, on the reading of newspapers, and on other highly practical questions. The editor is looking for several good articles on the teaching of specific literary selections or types of literature, and will welcome your contributions. He is also looking for short "how-to-do-it" fillers.

The major project of the Association for 1953-54 will be a brand-new edition of the popular list *Books We Like*, which was first printed in 1942. Those who are familiar with *Books We Like* will recall that it includes student-written annotations of hundreds of books that are favorites of the students themselves. The Curriculum Committee, with Liesette McHarry as its chairman, and the Library Committee, with chairman Addie Hochstrasser, will work with members of the Illinois Library Association on this important project. They may ask your aid.

It is your membership and your willingness to work upon such vital problems that make the projects possible. Your Association is acquiring a national reputation for doing important things. It has members in over half of the states, and some issues of the *Bulletin* go to all forty-eight states, as well as to Hawaii, Alaska, Canada, Latin America, England, and Italy. (So far the Iron Curtain, unfortunately, has not been penetrated.) The I.A.T.E., second oldest and one of the largest of the associations of teachers of English, is not relaxing into senility. You are keeping it youthful in spirit and high in accomplishments.

RENEW NOW FOR 1952-1953

Date _____

To C. W. ROBERTS
204-A Lincoln Hall
Urbana, Illinois

JUN 24 1952

I am paying \$2.00 annual membership dues to the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. This also pays for a year's subscription to the Bulletin.

Name _____

Address _____

(Please fill out both cards)

Date _____

To C. W. ROBERTS
204-A Lincoln Hall
Urbana, Illinois

I am paying \$2.00 annual membership dues to the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. This also pays for a year's subscription to the Bulletin.

Name _____

Address _____

